UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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EXAMINER
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

PTOL-90A (Rev. 04/07)

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE <u>3</u> MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.
- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on <u>25 April 2008</u>.

2a)☒ This action is **FINAL**.   2b)☐ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) <u>1-43</u> is/are pending in the application.

    4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) <u>1-43</u> is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☒ The drawing(s) filed on <u>27 February 2004</u> is/are: a)☒ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

    Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

    Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

    a)☐ All   b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

      1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

      2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

      3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

    * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)

2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)

3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
    Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.

4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
    Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ .

5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application

6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1.   This communication is in response to the correspondence sent on April 25, 2008.

Claims 1 – 11 and 13 – 43, as originally filed, are currently pending and have been

considered below. The amendment to claim 12 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2.   The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that

form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

> A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –
>
> (b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

3.   **Claims 1 – 42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by**

Junger (6,463,421).

As per claim 1, Junger discloses a method for processing a product return using

a plurality of management systems, comprising:

inspecting the product return to determine a disposition decision for the product

return (fig. 1 and col. 3 line 66 – col. 4 line 5; discusses inspecting of a product);

capturing the disposition decision for the product return in a first management

system (fig. 3, item 324 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32; discusses deposition decision

information);

communicating the captured disposition decision from the first management

system to a second management system (fig. 3, item 324 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32;

discusses communicating the captured disposition decision with a indication flag associated with product); and

triggering, in response to the captured disposition decision, at least one process in the second management system (fig. 1 and col. 3 line 66 – col. 4 line 5; discusses issuing a credit or replacement).

As per claim 2, Junger discloses, wherein the first management system is a warehouse management system ([abstract]; manufacturer computer system is construed as a warehouse management system).

As per claim 3, Junger discloses, wherein the second management system is a customer relationship management (CRM) system ([abstract]; regional product return center is construed as a customer relationship management system), and

the at least one process is updating a customer account (col. 9, lines 1 – 8; the return center credits the customer when return has been accepted)

As per claim 4, Junger discloses, wherein the first management system is a warehouse management system and the second management system is a customer relationship management (CRM) system, and wherein the method further comprises sending a CRM notification from the warehouse management system to the CRM system (fig. 3, item 324 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32; discusses sending a CRM notification with a indication flag associated with product sent to the return center).

As per claim 5, Junger discloses, wherein triggering comprises updating a customer account with the CRM system based on the CRM notification (young () 20; discusses updating a customer account).

As per claim 6, Junger discloses, wherein the at least one process is performing customer management (col. 3 line 66 – col. 4 line 5; discusses issuing a credit or replacement, which is construed as customer management).

As per claim 7, Junger discloses, further comprising triggering, in response to the captured disposition decision, at least one process in the first management system, the first management system comprising a warehouse management system ([abstract]; The manufacturer computer system, which is construed as the first management system, utilizes the identifying information to access an electronic registration database).

As per claim 8, Junger discloses, a method for processing a returned product, the method comprising:

inspecting a returned product to determine a disposition of the returned product (fig. 1 and col. 3 line 66 – col. 4 line 5; discusses inspecting of a product);

capturing, in a first management system, a decision code (col. 6, line 66 – col. 7, line 14; discusses receiving a code (upc) for return validation, which is edited to indicate the decision) representing the determined disposition of the returned product (fig. 3, item 324 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32; discusses deposition decision information),

the decision code being uniquely identifying a set of activities (col. 4 lines 6 - 14;

discusses a decision code that is a set of activities);

and triggering each activity identified by the decision code, wherein at least one

of the activities is triggered in a second management system (col. 4 lines 6 - 14;

discusses the triggered activity of arranging for shipment).

As per claim 9, Junger further discloses further comprising:

providing a unique identifier to identify the returned product (see fig. 5A); and

communicating the decision code and the unique identifier from the first

management system to the second management system (col. 8 lines 17 – 32;

discusses the return identification number and notifying the return center, which is

construed as the second management system).

As per claim 10, Junger discloses, wherein the first management system

comprises a warehouse management system ([abstract]; manufacturer computer

system is construed as a warehouse management system, and

wherein the triggering comprises creating, in the warehouse management

system, a transfer order for the returned product (col. 8, line 66 – col. 9, line 8;

discusses return authorization labels which are construed as transfer orders).

As per claim 11, Junger discloses, wherein the second management system

comprises a customer relationship management (CRM) system ([abstract]; regional

product return center is construed as a customer relationship management system),

and

wherein the triggering further comprises sending, to the CRM system, a CRM

notification for the returned product and updating, in the CRM system, a customer

account based on the CRM notification for the returned product (col. 9, lines 1 – 8; the

return center credits the customer when return has been accepted).

As per claim 12, Junger discloses, a method for processing a product return,

comprising:

providing a set of decision codes (col. 6, line 66 – col. 7, line 14; discusses

receiving codes (upc) for return validation, which is edited to indicate the decision);

inspecting the product return at a warehouse (fig. 1 and col. 3 line 66 – col. 4 line

5; discusses inspecting of a product) and

selecting a decision code from the set of decision codes, in a first management

system, based on an inspection result (col. 8 lines 17 – 32; discusses an inspection

result and selecting a decision code, which is construed as flagging the product);

updating a record, in a second management system, for the product return to

include the decision code selected from the set of decision codes (fig. 328 and col. 8

lines 17 – 32; discusses updating product information to indicate approved status); and

triggering an activity to be performed, in the second management system, for the product return based on the decision code in the record (fig. 1 and col. 3 line 66 – col. 4 line 5; discusses issuing a credit or replacement).

As per claim 13, Junger discloses, wherein the updating comprises updating the record with an effort code, the effort code providing information related to an additional effort activity for the product return (col. 4, lines 15 – 28; discusses efforts associated with processing product returns).

As per claim 14, Junger discloses, wherein the record comprises a warehouse (WH) request (fig. 4G; depicts a warehouse request) and a unique identifier for the product return (fig. 5A; depicts a unique identifier).

As per claim 15, Junger discloses, wherein the triggering comprises issuing a transfer order for the product return based on the decision code (col. 8, line 66 – col. 9, line 8; discusses return authorization labels which are construed as transfer orders, which is based on approval).

As per claim 16, Junger discloses, wherein the method further comprises

transferring the product return in response to the transfer order and performing a follow- up activity on the product return (col. 8, line 66 – col. 9, line 8; discusses processing the return).

As per claim 17, Junger discloses, wherein the method further comprises

communicating a disposition decision based on the inspection result to a

customer relationship management (CRM) system (fig. 3, item 324 and col. 8 lines 17 –

32; discusses deposition decision information and inspection).

As per claim 18, Junger discloses a computer readable medium comprising

instructions for carrying out a method for processing a product return, the method

comprising:

capturing a disposition decision for the product return in a first management

system (fig. 3, item 324 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32; discusses deposition decision

information); and

triggering, in response to the captured disposition decision, at least one process

related to the product return in a second management system (fig. 1 and col. 3 line 66 –

col. 4 line 5; discusses issuing a credit or replacement).

As per claim 19, Junger discloses, wherein the first management system is a

warehouse management system ([abstract]; manufacturer computer system is

construed as a warehouse management system).

As per claim 20, Junger discloses, wherein the second management system is a

customer relationship (CRM) management system, and the at least one process is

performing customer management ([abstract]; regional product return center is

construed as a customer relationship management system).

As per claim 21, Junger discloses, wherein the first management system is a warehouse management system and the second management system is a customer relationship management (CRM) system, and wherein the method further comprises communicating a CRM notification from the warehouse management system to the CRM system (fig. 3, item 324 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32; discusses sending a CRM notification with a indication flag associated with product sent to the return center).

As per claim 22, Junger discloses, wherein triggering comprises updating a customer account with the CRM system based on the CRM notification.

As per claim 23, Junger discloses, wherein the at least one process is performing customer management (col. 3 line 66 – col. 4 line 5; discusses issuing a credit or replacement, which is construed as customer management).

As per claim 24, Junger further discloses, comprising triggering, in response to the captured disposition decision, at least one process in the first management system, the first management system comprising a warehouse management system ([abstract]; The manufacturer computer system, which is construed as the first management system, utilizes the identifying information to access an electronic registration database).

As per claim 25, Junger discloses, a computer readable medium comprising instructions for carrying out a method for processing a returned product, the method comprising:

inspecting a returned product to determine a disposition of the returned product

(fig. 1 and col. 3 line 66 – col. 4 line 5; discusses inspecting of a product);

capturing, in a first management system, a decision code (col. 6, line 66 – col. 7,

line 14; discusses receiving a code (upc) for return validation, which is edited to indicate

the decision) representing the determined disposition of the returned product (fig. 3,

item 324 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32; discusses deposition decision information),

the decision code uniquely identifying a set of activities (col. 4 lines 6 - 14;

discusses a set of activities); and

triggering each activity identified by the decision code, wherein at least one of the

activities is triggered in a second management system (fig. 1 and col. 3 line 66 – col. 4

line 5; discusses issuing a credit or replacement).

As per claim 26, Junger discloses, wherein the second management system is a

customer relationship management (CRM) system ([abstract]; regional product return

center is construed as a customer relationship management system) and

the triggering comprises triggering an update to a customer account with the

CRM system based on the decision code (fig. 2, items 324, 328 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32;

discusses an update based on the decision code).

As per claim 27, Junger discloses, wherein the first management system

comprises a warehouse management system ([abstract]; manufacturer computer

system is construed as a warehouse management system), and

wherein the triggering comprises creating, in the warehouse management system, a transfer order for the returned product (col. 8, line 66 – col. 9, line 8; discusses return authorization labels which are construed as transfer orders).

As per claim 28, Junger discloses, wherein the second management system comprises a customer relationship management (CRM) system ([abstract]; regional product return center is construed as a customer relationship management system), and

wherein the triggering comprises sending, to (CRM) system, a CRM notification to trigger customer management (fig. 328 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32; discusses flagging the product which is construed as a notification to trigger customer management).

As per claim 29, Junger discloses, a computer readable medium comprising instructions for carrying out a method for processing a product return, the method comprising:

providing a set of decision codes (col. 6, line 66 – col. 7, line 14; discusses receiving codes (upc) for return validation, which is edited to indicate the decision);

updating, in a first management system, a record for the product return to include a decision code (col. 6, line 66 – col. 7, line 14; discusses receiving a code (upc) for return validation, which is edited to indicate the decision) from the set of decision codes that corresponds to a disposition decision for the product return (fig. 328 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32; discusses updating product information to indicate approved status); and

triggering, in a second management system, a process to be carried out based

on the disposition decision (fig. 1 and col. 3 line 66 – col. 4 line 5; discusses issuing a

credit or replacement).

As per claim 30, Junger discloses, wherein the first management system

comprises a warehouse management system, and wherein the record comprises a

warehouse request (WHR) (fig. 4G; depicts a warehouse request).

As per claim 31, Junger discloses, wherein the second management system

comprises a customer relationship management (CRM) system.

As per claim 32, Junger discloses, wherein the triggering comprises triggering

the CRM system to update a customer account based on the disposition decision (col.

9, lines 1 – 8; the return center credits the customer when return has been accepted).

As per claim 33, Junger discloses, wherein the method further comprises

transferring the product return based on the update of the record in the first

management system (col. 8, line 66 – col. 9, line 8; discusses processing the return).

As per claim 34, Junger discloses, A system for processing a product return, the

system comprising:

a first management module for receiving a decision code (col. 6, line 66 – col. 7,

line 14; discusses receiving a code (upc) for return validation, which is edited to indicate

the decision) and

creating, in response to receiving the decision code, a first record relating to the

product return (fig. 328 and col. 8 lines 17 – 32; discusses creating a return

authorization number); and

a second management module for receiving the first record and for initiating an

update to a second record in response to receiving the record (fig. 328 and col. 8 lines

17 – 32; discusses updating product information).

As per claim 35, Junger discloses, wherein the first management module is a

warehouse management module ([abstract]; manufacturer computer system is

construed as a warehouse management module).

As per claim 36, Junger discloses, wherein the second management system is a

customer relationship management (CRM) module ([abstract]; regional product return

center is construed as a customer relationship management module).

As per claim 37, Junger discloses, wherein the first record comprises a CRM

notification (fig. 4G; depicts a CRM notification, which verifies return information).

As per claim 38, Junger discloses, wherein the second record comprises a

customer account (col. 9, lines 1 – 8; the return center credits the customer when return

has been accepted).

As per claim 39, Junger discloses, wherein the decision code uniquely identifies

a set of activities to be performed in accordance with a disposition decision for the

product return (col. 4 lines 6 - 14; discusses a decision code that is a set of activities).

As per claim 40, Junger discloses, wherein a unique identifier for the product

return is received by the second management module when receiving the first record

(col. 8, line 66 – col. 9, line 8; discusses the return authorization label received).

As per claim 41, Junger discloses, wherein the first management module issues

a transfer order to transfer the product return based on the decision code (col. 8, line 66

– col. 9, line 8; discusses return authorization labels which are construed as transfer

orders).

As per claim 42, Junger discloses, wherein an effort code for an additional effort

activity related to the product return is received by the second management module

when receiving the first record (col. 4, lines 15 – 28; discusses efforts associated with

processing product returns).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4.   The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all

obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set
> forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and
> the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the
> invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains.
> Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

5.   **Claim 43 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over**

Junger (6,463,421) in view of Haseltine (2001/0032143).

As per claim 43, Junger discloses the claimed invention but fails to explicitly

disclose wherein the second management module determines, based on the effort

code, an effort value to charge a customer account for the additional effort activity.

Haseltine teaches a method and system providing out-sourced, merchandise

return services, wherein the second management module determines, based on the

effort code, an effort value to charge a customer account for the additional effort activity

([0011] discusses a restocking fee, which is construed as an effort value charge).

From this teaching of Haseltine, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary

skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the method and apparatus

for efficient handling of product return transactions to include the effort value charge,

taught by Haseltine, in order to offset the cost of service.

Response to Arguments

6.   Applicant's arguments filed April 25, 2008 have been fully considered but they

are not persuasive. Applicant argues "Junger does not teach or suggest at least either

'capturing the disposition decision' or 'a second management system."

However, col. 3 line 66 – col. 4, line 14 discuss capturing the disposition

decision. It discusses the personnel at the local retail store reviewing the product for

verification of the condition, which is disposition information and entails a disposition

decision.

The manufacturer computer system discussed in the abstract is construed as the first management system and the regional product return center, also discussed in the abstract is construed as the second management system.

Col. 3, line 66 – col. 4, line 14 also discusses a second management system where after the products arrive at the regional warehouse, they are inspected again to insure that they comply with the return conditions, therefore the examiner respectfully disagrees.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to OLUSEYE IWARERE whose telephone number is (571)270-5112. The examiner can normally be reached on M-Th.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's

supervisor, Matthew S. Gart can be reached on (571)272-6790. The fax phone number

for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the

Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for

published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR.

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For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should

you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic

Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a

USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information

system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Matthew S Gart/
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Unit 3687

OI